



News from

# Congressman Ron Kind

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN'S THIRD  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

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## KIND URGES ACTION TO MINIMIZE KATRINA'S FINANCIAL FALLOUT FOR AGRICULTURE

*Seeks Estimates of Hurricane's Impact on Mississippi River Commerce*

**Washington, DC** – Concerned that the hurricane-damaged ports of the Mississippi River, principally the Port of New Orleans, could significantly disrupt agricultural export shipments downriver, U.S. Rep. Ron Kind (D-WI) sent a letter today to the heads of the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Transportation, and the Army Corps of Engineers calling for an immediate and unified effort to ensure that the nation's farm community does not face unnecessary financial hardship. The letter is below:

September 9, 2005

The Honorable Mike Johanns  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250

The Honorable Norman Mineta  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
400 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 10408  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Lieutenant General Carl A. Strock  
Commander and Chief of Engineers  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
441 G Street, NW Room 3F05  
Washington, D.C. 20314

Dear Gentlemen:

As our nation continues to collectively grieve for the families hardest hit by Hurricane Katrina, I respectfully draw your attention to a potential economic crisis resulting from this disaster for agriculture producers, shippers, and rural economies throughout the Midwest.

This past year has been challenging for the Midwest agriculture industry; including a difficult summer drought and sky-rocketing petroleum prices. However, with the damage done to the Port of New Orleans by the destruction of Hurricane Katrina, there is real fear among the farm

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community that soon-to-be harvested fall crops will not be able to be transported down the Mississippi River to export markets. Coupled with lower-than-normal production yields, escalating petroleum costs, and now a crippled Port of New Orleans to handle their grain crop, the farm community is rightly concerned.

As you know, the Mississippi River is a vital artery for commerce, carrying nearly 500 million tons of cargo each year including nearly 60 percent of the nation's grain exports. For example, each week, about 35 million bushels of corn are exported from the United States, most from the Gulf of Mexico. The ports in Louisiana make up the largest port complex in the nation and are major terminals equipped with specialized warehouses and equipment needed to handle the commodities. Frankly put, the extent of the economic damage upriver will depend on how soon and how completely the Mississippi and shipping facilities return to service.

As the leaders of three agencies instrumental in providing remedial relief to Katrina-affected areas, I call upon you and your departments to begin work with the various sectors of the agriculture and shipping industries as well as appropriate state and local officials to ensure that unnecessary financial hardship is not faced by our nation's farm community. Specifically, efforts must immediately begin regarding alternative transportation, storage, and possible use for our nation's grain. In addition, I request your departments provide my office your initial cost assessments of the impact Katrina will have on the commercial shipping industry that depends upon an open, navigable Mississippi River transportation system.

Thank you for your immediate consideration of this request. I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

Ron Kind  
Member of Congress